



# School Safety Newsletter

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## Mass Shootings May Be Affected by 'Media Contagion': Researchers

ABC News, August 5, 2016

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/mass-shootings-affected-media-contagion-researchers/story?id=41127127>

Alarmed by an increase in mass shootings in the U.S., researchers are examining whether the 24-hour news cycle and social media may play a role.

This week, two media researchers from Western New Mexico University presented a paper that looked at whether the incidence of gun massacres may be affected by what they call a "media contagion."

At a meeting of the American Psychological Association, researchers Jennifer Johnston and Andrew Joy gave findings from their research examining past studies on when gun massacres occur and profiles of the perpetrators.

In particular, they looked at a 2015 study that examined 57 billion tweets, of which 72 million used the word "shooting" and 2 million the words "mass murder" or "school shooting."

One of the most startling of Johnston and Joy's findings is that the more tweets that occur about a mass shooting, the higher the chance of another gun massacre occurring soon after.

If, after a school shooting, at least 10 out of every million tweets mentions the incident, the likelihood that there will be another school shooting increases to 50 percent within eight days after the initial violence and to 100 percent within 35 days afterward, according to the paper.

Johnston told ABC News that she was struck that the number of mass shootings has increased at a time when homicide in general is not on the rise, and she wanted to understand why, calling it a "complicated issue."

She said that the rise in gun massacres began after the year 2000, when the average of two to three mass shootings per year climbed to 20 such incidents in 2015, "a three-fold increase over a 15-year time span."

The evidence points to the idea that mass violence is likely "contagious," she said.

"Now we have some pretty solid evidence that it is," she said. "There is a clear pattern that is not due to chance."

From combing through multiple studies, Johnston and Joy also found that the perpetrator of mass shootings usually "desired fame and wished to emulate a previous mass shooter."

*Protecting our  
future through  
information  
sharing*

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## **Mass Shootings May Be Affected by ‘Media Contagion’: Researchers** **(Continued)**

"We would argue identification with prior mass shooters made famous by extensive media coverage, including names, faces, writings, and detailed accounts of their lives and backgrounds, is a more powerful push toward violence than mental health status or even access to guns," the authors write in their presentation paper.

The researchers suggest that the media refrain from giving details about mass shootings -- including names, photos, or a perpetrator's manifesto after a mass killing – and advocated instead for a “Don’t Name Them” campaign developed by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training research division at Texas State University at San Marcos along with the FBI and families of victims.

The authors say that holding back details about gun massacres would deprive killers from getting the publicity they want and could also prevent mass shootings from inspiring copycats.

Nancy Mramor, a media and health psychologist based in Pittsburgh, said the motive of perpetrators in mass shootings cannot be boiled down to a single influence. But she said there is precedent for the media to deliberately change how it covers events so as not to encourage others to perpetrate similar violence. She noted that many media companies have over the years reduced the amount of detail they give about suicides because there is a known copycat effect.

“What happens if you focus intently on the perpetrator? You provide them with 15 minutes of fame,” Mramor said.

For more information, visit: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2016/08/media-contagion.aspx>

## **Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Issues New Warning On Scams Targeting Students and Parents for Back to School Season**

Forbes, Kelly Phillips Erb

August 20, 2016

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyphillipserb/2016/08/20/irs-issues-new-warning-on-scams-targeting-students-and-parents-for-back-to-school-season/#3042e62b71a0>

With back to school season in full swing, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has issued a new warning for taxpayers to be particularly vigilant for scammers looking for opportunities to take advantage of students and parents.

In particular, the IRS reminds taxpayers to be on the lookout for IRS impersonators calling students and demanding that they wire money immediately to pay a fake “federal student tax.” There is no such tax.

The lack of such a tax hasn’t kept scammers from targeting students, including becoming aggressive and threatening to report students and their families to the police if they do not immediately wire money via MoneyGram or other untraceable method. The callers generally have some piece of information that makes the call seem legit. That information might be the name of the student’s school or info that is designed to make the student feel like the caller is a real authoritative figure. Sometimes, if the student hangs up on the caller, the caller follows up with spoofed caller-ID information advising that 911 or the U.S. Government is calling. *It’s all fake.*

The IRS initially warned taxpayers about the scam back in May. Now, as schools around the nation prepare to re-open, the IRS wants to remind taxpayers about the scheme, as well as encourage college and school communities to share this information so that students, parents and their families are aware of these scams.

## **Monthly Webinars!**

First Wednesday of  
Every Month at 10 am  
(Except January, July,  
and August).

### **Next Webinar**

**Wednesday  
September 7, 2016**

Each webinar has a round  
table discussion at the  
end. Questions are  
always welcome!

To participate, you must be a  
vetted member. For more  
information please email  
[schoolsafety@isp.state.il.us](mailto:schoolsafety@isp.state.il.us)

## **IRS Issues New Warning On Scams Targeting Students and Parents for Back to School Season** **(Continued)**

“Although variations of the IRS impersonation scam continue year-round, they tend to peak when scammers find prime opportunities to strike,” said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. “As students and parents enter the new school year, they should remain alert to bogus calls, including those demanding fake tax payments from students.”

Remember that the IRS has previously confirmed they will not:

- Call to demand immediate payment over the phone, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you several bills.
- Call or email you to verify your identity by asking for personal and financial information.
- Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone or email.
- Threaten to immediately bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.
- If you receive such a call and do not owe tax, don't engage with the scammer and do not give out any information. Just hang up.

Scammers are constantly identifying new tactics to carry out their crimes in new and unsuspecting ways. This year, the IRS has seen scammers use a variety of schemes to fool taxpayers into paying money or giving up personal information. In addition to personal calls, the IRS has reported an increase in “robo-calls” where scammers leave urgent callback requests telling taxpayers to call back to settle their “tax bill.” These fake calls, which often sound threatening, claim to be the last warning before legal action is taken. It's a widespread scam with scammers making multiple calls: I received one, too (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyphillipserb/2016/08/09/i-received-those-irs-lawsuit-calls-too-scammers-dont-discriminate/#17c1c12750c3>).

In another scam, IRS impersonators call and demand payment for taxes on iTunes and other gift cards. The IRS reminds taxpayers that any request to settle a tax bill by putting money on any form of gift card is a clear indication of a scam. Regardless of how ridiculous the scam sounds, earlier this year, hundreds of people have paid out more than \$1 million to the scammers using those iTunes gift cards.

Scammers are also targeting tax professionals by sending emails with spyware designed to track key strokes on the computer (you might have heard this referred to as “keylogging” or “keystroke logging”). This is a common tactic used by cyber thieves to steal login information, passwords and other sensitive data. Once thieves steal PIN codes, account numbers, and passwords, they can use this information to steal your identity (or the identity of your clients) to file fraudulent tax returns or hack into your bank accounts.

If you get a suspicious phone call or email from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money or other personal information, here's what you need to know:

- Don't engage with the scammer (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyphillipserb/2016/05/28/six-reasons-not-to-engage-with-scammers-no-matter-what-your-facebook-friends-tell-you/#224e203b58e2>) and do not give out any information. Just hang up.
- If you receive a telephone message from someone claiming to be from the IRS, and you do not owe tax, or if you are immediately aware that it's a scam, don't call them back.
- If you receive a phone call from someone claiming to be with the IRS, and you owe tax or think you may owe tax, do not give out any information. Call the IRS back at 1.800.829.1040 to find out more information.

## **IRS Issues New Warning On Scams Targeting Students and Parents for Back to School Season (Continued)**

Mia Ray Langheim  
School Intelligence  
Officer



- You can also contact Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) to report scam calls by calling 1.800.366.4484 or by using the “IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting” form on their website ([https://www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact\\_report\\_scam.shtml](https://www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact_report_scam.shtml)). You may also want to report the scam to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) by using the “FTC Complaint Assistant” (<https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/GettingStarted?NextQID=216&Selected=t#crnt>) to report persons pretending to be from the government; please add “IRS Telephone Scam” in the notes.

Don’t fall for the tricks. Keep your personal information safe by remaining alert. For tips on protecting yourself from identity theft related tax fraud visit: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyphillipsrb/2016/01/24/11-tips-to-protect-you-from-identity-theft-related-tax-fraud/#559df0cf4bb6>

## **Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance (REMS TA) Free Upcoming Webinars**

One Hour Webinars Starting at 1 p.m. Central

### **EOP Planning Webinar Series**

Friday, August 26: Forming a School Behavioral Threat Assessment Team - Participants will learn how to form a behavioral Threat Assessment Team at the district or school level. REMS TA Center staff will present some of the elements that make a threat assessment approach effective, and a K-12 practitioner will discuss how some of these elements have been successfully incorporated and implemented in districts.

Friday, September 16: State and Local Perspectives on Emergency Management Back to School Activities - Presenters from state education agencies and local education agencies will share what they are doing to support districts and schools in developing and revising EOPs as a part of back-to-school professional development activities. REMS TA Center staff will share how we can support state and local education agencies in their efforts to ensure EOPs in their schools and districts remain up-to-date.

### **Adversarial and Human-Caused Threats Webinar Series**

Friday, September 2: Use of Social Media in School Behavioral Threat Assessments - Presenters will discuss how recent technological advances have created additional considerations for behavioral threat assessments. Topics covered will include online threats and how they can be identified and addressed.

Wednesday, September 7: Integrating Bullying Prevention Efforts Into Emergency Management Planning - This Webinar will provide participants an understanding of the connection between bullying prevention and emergency management planning, including the preparedness missions. Participants will have an opportunity to examine the available resources to measure school climate and learn how to incorporate bullying prevention efforts into emergency management planning.

Friday, September 9: Incorporating Sextortion into School EOP Planning - Presenters from the U.S. Department of Education, REMS TA Center, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention will discuss the latest research and trends related to sextortion of K-12 youth. Topics covered will include analysis of tips from NCMEC’s CyberTipLine, details on Federal efforts to address the issue and provide support on the state/local level, and methods K-12 education agencies can use to prevent, respond to and recover from sextortion.

To register, visit: <http://remstacenter.org/webinars/Registration1.aspx?webinarid=1075>

To view other archived webinars, visit: [https://rems.ed.gov/TA\\_Webinars.aspx](https://rems.ed.gov/TA_Webinars.aspx)

### **School Safety Newsletter**

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